



***The Revelation of
Jesus Christ
Part II***

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR
SEPTEMBER 19 – OCTOBER 16

WEEK 6: THE UNHOLY TRINITY

Monday, September 19 – Revelation 12:1-6

Let's start with what we know. This last book of the Bible is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The child who is born in this passage is Jesus. Therefore, Revelation 12:1-6 is the Christmas story. It's not as pretty as the nativity scene we will put on our mantles in a couple of months, but this is the Christmas story. Satan wanted Jesus to fail in his mission to this earth. He wanted to get rid of Jesus before he could save the world. We see the turmoil in the world when Jesus is born. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus escape to Egypt so that Jesus is not murdered by King Herod. Metaphorically, the dragon was waiting to devour the child at his birth. But God protected his Son from Satan, and Satan fails in his endeavor.

In my opinion, Revelation 12-13 are the hardest chapters in Revelation to understand. There are so many characters introduced and such odd happenings that they just leave you scratching your head wondering what is going on. Who is this woman? Why does the dragon have seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns? What does it mean that the dragon swept a third of the stars from heaven to earth? I don't think anyone can have 100% assurance that they know what this means. I do think that the original hearers of Revelation understood, but we are too far removed from the culture of first century Christians to fully comprehend what is going on.

I do believe that the original hearers would have understood that the repercussions of Rev 12:1-6 would have been temporary. The woman's condition in the wilderness would not be permanent. She would be there 1260 days or 3 ½ years. Three and a half is a number of limits. It signifies that this condition is not forever. It's the same amount of time as the witnesses prophesy about the Lord. This world is not forever. This passage would give the churches the same type of hope that other passages of Revelation give. The dragon (Satan) has caused great

calamity in the world but the Son and the woman are safe, and this condition is only temporary. That's the hope the early church would have heard in this center point of Revelation. That is the message we should take away as well.

Tuesday, September 20 – Revelation 12:7-18

Here's part of why Rev 12 is so hard to understand: in an apocalyptic book, like Revelation, time and space are not always linear. Events are not progressing in an order which we normally expect, but the text is free to jump around. Revelation jumps from heaven to earth several times. It is disorientating at first to know if John is describing something happening on heaven or on earth. Regarding time, Rev 12 does not necessarily happen after Rev 11. Revelation 12-14 could be reviewing the action of Rev 6-11 in a different way. The best metaphor I can give is an apocalyptic book is like a time-lapse picture. A time-lapse picture takes images from several minutes or even longer and produces one image. When you look at the time-lapse picture, you don't know what happened first or last, you just know it's in the picture. It's not a perfect illustration, but that's what is happening in Revelation. We know these metaphorical events are in the picture but we don't know when. Is Rev 12:7-12 before the book of Genesis? Could be. Does this passage just explain what is ongoing in the spiritual realm while we live our lives? That's possible too.

I think we can miss the point of this story when we try to decode every little thing. Look at the big picture of this passage: at every turn, the dragon and his forces are defeated. The woman is protected and Michael fights back. Satan has already lost and has no power. The difficult news is that because Satan cannot defeat the woman, he turns his attention to her children. Despite suffering, have hope because Satan has been defeated and truly has no power. As Jesus said in Revelation 1:18, "I have the keys of Death and Hades." Even when it seems like

evil is winning, remember Satan holds no power because Jesus has already conquered death for the entire world.

Wednesday, September 21 – Revelation 13:1-10

I titled this week the Unholy Trinity. Today, we meet the beast of the sea, the second person of this triad. This beast is given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation. This beast makes war on Christians and conquers them (or at least it thinks it conquers them). This sea beast has ten horns and seven heads, the same as the dragon. One peculiar point made in regards to one of its heads is that one head looked to have been mortally wounded, but that wound had miraculously healed. Two possibilities regarding this and both could be true at the same time. The first is that this beast is opening mocking the wounds of the Lamb. The beast is laughing about the scars which Christ bears for our sake. The beast is truly evil. The second possibility requires us to know that Revelation was written toward the end of the first century. The emperor Nero (who will come up again during Friday's reading) was ruthless in his persecution of Christians. Nero was killed in 68 AD about 20 years before Revelation was written. There was a rumor that survived to the days of the writing of Revelation that Nero was not actually dead; instead, Nero was just waiting for the right time to come "back to life" to continue his ruthless reign.

Regardless of who or what this beast is or represents, the message of the passage arrives in verses 9 and 10. Even if you are persecuted, don't fight back. Endure and conquer the way I have taught you. What a hard message to hear, but this is the message which is consistent throughout the New Testament. Jesus tells us to love our enemies and turn the other cheek when they inflict violence. Jesus tells Peter to lay down his sword on the night Jesus is arrested. Jesus' message is always consistent: endure the persecution which is at hand and keep the faith. Trust

in the Lord that He fought on your behalf and has already won the victory. This is not a message for only one generation of people, but this is a message from Jesus for all generations of Christians. Don't fight as the world fights, but endure and persevere, trusting that the Lord will take care of you.

Thursday, September 22 – Revelation 13:11-18

The mark of the beast and the number 666. Two of the most talked about items of Revelation are found in these 8 verses. These things are usually associated with a person: the Antichrist. What you can notice in this passage is that the name "Antichrist" never appears. In fact, a person named the "Antichrist" never appears in Revelation. Are the dragon and two beasts anti-Christ? Yes. But no person in Revelation is designated as the Antichrist. People spend so much time trying to decipher who could be the Antichrist in the End-times, and that person is not even mentioned in Revelation.

What we do find in Rev 13:11-18 is the second beast who bears witness to the first beast who has the number 666. This beast is the third person of the Unholy Trinity. This beast is the false prophet who directs the world to worship the first beast who has the authority of the dragon. This person is a poor photo copy of our Lord. In that regard, this person is anti-Christ. The vision makes it clear that this one is a fraud. The number 666 shows that it is inferior to God whose number is 7. Six repeating three times shows a completeness of this inferiority. Three is a number of fulfillment. The number of the beast in this vision shows that the beast is completely inferior to God.

What Revelation 12-13 together show is how this Unholy Trinity is attempting to be God but is always inferior. The dragon gives the first beast power and both are worshipped. The second beast points people and urges/forces people to worship the dragon and beast. This is similar to how the Father gives the Son

power and both are worshipped. The Holy Spirit points people and urges people to worship the Father and Son. The Unholy Trinity tried to be the Holy Trinity but it can never be. Don't fall for the antics of those who try to be God. They will never succeed, and as we will see in the next week, their failure will bring down all their worshippers as well.

Friday, September 23 – Revelation 14:1-20

The human body can only take so much consistent force before you get motion sick. Roller coaster designers understand this need for a break. Even when you are on a roller coaster simulator, the roller coaster will calm down at certain points so that riders do not get sick. Each rider gets a chance to reset their equilibrium before going to the next thrill-seeking drop or loop. Revelation 14 is a respite from the persecution seen in this part of Revelation. It's a break in the roller coaster so everyone can catch their breath. There are three visions in Rev 14. Each vision gives us an appropriate way to respond when it seems like the beasts and Babylon are winning in our world today.

The visions start with worship. How many times have we found worship in Revelation? The answer is a lot. A new song is sung by the 144,000 in front of the throne of God and creatures and elder. The vision makes it seem as if the 144,000 are following the Lamb. Instead of the mark of the beast on their forehead, they have been marked by the Lamb and the Father. A time of worship occurs while the beasts and dragon seem to reign. Worship gives us an opportunity to take a break from the constant stress of life.

The next vision is of proclamation. It is a vision of preaching. Three angels cry out to say to fear God and give him glory. Babylon will fall. And those who worship Babylon will fall as well. Like the prophets of old, the messengers from heaven prophecy about what is happening.

The last vision is a call to righteous living. It is a reminder that a harvest is coming. It is a parable-like story which explains that our lives are to produce a crop worth harvesting. How bountiful will our crop of holy living be when it is time to reap?

Worship, preaching, and righteous living. These are the habits we are to develop during the times of beasts, dragons, seals, trumpets, plagues, etc. Worship, preaching, and righteous living. As we continue to read Revelation, it's going to get worse before it gets better. In your life, it may get worse before it gets better. Even when life does get worse, though, stay strong in the Lord. Continue to spend time with God (worship), tell others about God (preaching), and live as God desires. It will be worth it in the end.

Saturday – Sunday, September 23-24 – Revelation 19:1-3

WEEK 7: THE FALL OF THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD

Monday, September 26 – Daniel 7:1-8

Why are we starting with Daniel this week? Have you ever heard the expression “time is a flat circle?” This phrase means that everything that happens to us has happened before and will happen again. There is nothing new that happens on the earth. Nothing is solved, nothing gets better. The same events happen to different people across the world and across generations. “Time is a flat circle.”

Similar beasts to the two in Revelation show up in Daniel. The four beasts in Daniel 7 seem to represent the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek Empires. Each empire swallowed up the previous one with each kingdom being more ruthless than its predecessor. Time sometimes feels like a flat circle.

Time being a flat circle is fairly bleak and depressing to be honest. But when discussing the beasts of Daniel and the beasts of Revelation, it actually gives hope. The beasts of Daniel are overcome when the Ancient of Days takes his throne and one like the son of man comes. The beasts of Revelation will be overcome as we continue in that vision. There will always be “beasts coming from the sea.” Evil will always have a foothold in this world until Jesus returns and makes everything right once again. We live in a beast-filled world, but we have hope. We have hope because God has conquered the beasts before. Because he has defeated the beasts in the past, we can have confidence that he will continue to conquer the beasts in the present, and he will overcome the beasts in the future. He does it in Daniel. He does it in Revelation. He will do it today as well.

Tuesday, September 27 – Daniel 7:9-14

So many of the elements found in these six verses today we have already read in Revelation. We find ourselves in the heavenly throne room once again like we have a few times in Revelation. The Ancient One is on the throne and he is clothed in white with his hair like white wool. We see the multitudes from all peoples, nations, and languages serving/worshipping God. Daniel is having an apocalyptic vision much like John has been having in Revelation.

There is also the title “Son of Man” given to this one who comes to the Ancient One. When the original readers of Daniel would have read this passage, they would have immediately recognized that this passage was about the coming Messiah. To us, it should be clear that this Son of Man is Jesus. If we cannot make that connection on our own, Jesus gives himself the title Son of Man in the Gospels.

If you recall yesterday’s verses, the fourth beast is terrorizing God’s people. As the Ancient One is introduced in verses 9-10, you start to get the sense that

there is going to be this great battle. Then in verse 11, something happens that is going to become familiar to us over the coming days. The beast is killed with little effort. There is no prolonged battle. There is no war. God wins quickly and easily. That's it. And a new age is ushered in "after a season and time" as the other beasts are held captive by God's rule and reign.

This simplicity of winning is part of the message of Revelation. Revelation is a beautiful message of perseverance and endurance. It is a message of trusting in God to fight the battles and win them easily. As God vanquishes your foes and wins the battles, remember he has already won the war. He won that on a Sunday morning when he rose from the dead and beat Death once and for all. Yes, the battles still rage, but God always wins. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his kingdom will never be destroyed!

Wednesday, September 28 – Daniel 7:15-28

Revelation is unique in the apocalyptic genre. Throughout much of the book, we've been left guessing at what each symbol and character means. That has left some theologians to consider the possibility that we are missing the portion of Revelation which does interpret the visions John has. Most apocalypses do give the reader an interpretation during or after the vision. Revelation is unique in that it does not do that.

Daniel 7, however, does give the reader an interpretation of the vision and that interpretation is what we read today. Yes, the interpretation seems unhelpful to us but remember, we are at least 2200 years removed from the original readers of Daniel. A search of history makes it clear what this vision was originally about.

Maybe you are familiar with the story of Hanukkah. Hanukkah commemorates the miracle of God's provision of oil in the Temple during the Maccabean Revolt in the 2nd century BC. The Maccabean Revolt was in response

to the policies of Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Essentially, verses 23-25 are a laundry list of his acts as ruler. His most blasphemous act was to corrupt the Jewish Temple by installing a statue of Zeus. Antiochus rose to power in similar fashion to the description of the small horn in Daniel 7. When the Temple was desecrated by Antiochus, the Maccabees led the war against Antiochus and won for a short time.

The prophecy of Daniel 7 was fulfilled in the 2nd century BC, but it is also still being fulfilled today. It meant something to the original readers. It had an earthly meaning with earthly salvation from a blasphemous ruler. It also means something today as we look forward to a day when the beasts are not in charge for “a time, two times, and half a time” (3 ½). The kingdoms of this world are only temporary; the Kingdom of God is forever.

Thursday, September 29 – Revelation 17-18

It's time. At the beginning of Mark, that is the message. It's time, the Kingdom of God is at hand. In a similar vein here in Revelation 17: it's time, the fall of the kingdoms of this world is at hand. The fall of Babylon is upon us.

We will read Revelation 17-18 today and tomorrow because they are two versions of the same story. Revelation 17-18 follows the same pattern as when Israel crosses the Red Sea in Exodus 14-15. The first part tells the story as a typical story. The second part tells the story as a poem/song. The same pattern is also found in Deborah's story in Judges 4-5.

It would have been clear to the original hearers of Revelation that this woman represented Rome. Rome was called the city on seven hills. It's clear that Rome is meant in Rev 17:9: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated.” Rome was personified by the goddess Roma. Roma was used in Roman propaganda to justify its rule over the Empire. The vision of Revelation

shows Rome for who she is: a prostitute whose opulence is built upon the lands that she has enslaved.

While Revelation reveals who Rome actually is, the people who are in the Roman machine are clueless. This is why the proclamation is clear in 18:4 “come out of her, my people...” The Roman Empire was the most lavish and powerful Empire up to that point in world history. The pull to be part of that would have been very strong. We know the Laodiceans had been pulled in. I envision Rev 18:4-8 like a firefighter screaming to the people as the building is burning “get out, get out, get out... while you still can.” The time for judgment was coming for Babylon. Rome received its judgment. It hasn’t been an empire for 1600 years. All kingdoms of this world fall. That’s why we must put our trust in the Kingdom of God instead.

Friday, September 30 – Revelation 17-18

Do you know who is most upset when the Babylons of the world fall? The people who made the most money in Babylon. For them, the party is about to be over. Verses 11-19 chronicle all the people who will be mourning the fall of Babylon: merchants, shipmasters, and sailors. Commerce will be in shambles when Babylon falls. The stock-market crashes, companies go bankrupt, banks run out of money, food becomes scarce, and people will lose everything.

This reminds me of the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament. Several prophets proclaim about the Day of the Lord. God’s people can’t wait for the Day of the Lord. What a great day when God comes and rights all wrongs. Joel responds to these people by basically saying: “you want the Day of the Lord? Are you sure you are ready for the Day of the Lord? It is going to be a tragic day. It is going to be a day of heartache for those who were not ready.”

When much of the world is built doing things the world's way instead of God's way, the Day of the Lord is going to be...well...apocalyptic! That is why it is so important that we do not build our lives and conduct our business as the world does. We do not buy into what Babylon is selling. We stay away from Babylon's sin. If we have participated with Babylon, we must repent of our sins and "come out of her." Don't put your trust in the kingdoms of this world. They are all destined to fall.

Saturday – Sunday, October 1-2 – Revelation 19:4-8

WEEK 8: THE RIDER ON THE WHITE HORSE COMES!

Monday, October 3 – Revelation 19:11-21

Don't miss the entire picture of the rider on the white horse. Too many Christians do. They see this Jesus as the warrior Jesus. This is the Jesus they have been waiting for. Not the one who lays down his life for his friends, but the Jesus who runs into battle and kills his adversaries. In the words of one, now disgraced, pastor: this is the tatted up, MMA-fighter Jesus with blood dripping down his robe.

This explanation of Jesus could not be further from the truth. This Jesus in Rev 19 is the same Jesus that has been with God since the beginning. Let's highlight two parts of the picture. One, Jesus' robe is dipped in blood. At first glance, this seems valiant and strong. But let's take a closer look. When Jesus enters the scene from heaven, his robe is already dipped in blood. Jesus hasn't fought anyone yet. This blood is not the blood of enemies, but this is Jesus' own blood. This is not a new picture of Jesus. This is the same picture of Jesus who spilled his own blood for the sake of the world.

Two, recognize Jesus' weapon. Once again, like Jesus appeared in Rev 1, Jesus' weapon is a sharp sword which comes from his mouth. This is not an

ordinary battle taking place. Jesus isn't leading an army into a physical battle, but his word comes forth as a sharp sword defeating the beasts and all the kings of the world. Enemies are defeated by the power of Jesus' words. The birds gorging on the corpses is grotesque, but this battle is not violent. It is as over as quickly as it begins. The beasts and kings of this world don't stand a chance against the power of the Word of God.

Let me repeat that last sentence: the beasts and kings of this world don't stand a chance against the power of the Word of God. You and I both have access to the Word of God. He can speak through us to defeat evil in this world. Don't be intimidated by the evil in the world. When the Word of God is on our side, we have nothing to fear. The beasts don't stand a chance.

Tuesday, October 4 – Revelation 20:1-6

Six verses. Only six verses discuss The Millennium. The way you interpret these six verses has become a litmus test for what you believe about Revelation. Are you a Premillennialist who believes that Jesus will physically come to earth, defeat Satan, and reign with those who were martyred during the reign of the beast? Are you a Postmillennialist who believes that the church will conquer Satan and usher in 1000 years of peace which will end with Jesus' return? Are you an Amillennialist who believes that the Millennium should be taken metaphorically and Satan has figuratively bound when Jesus conquered Death. Amillennialists believe that we have been living in the Millennium since Jesus' Resurrection. Six verses have led to debates and schisms and creedal dividing lines. Whether you were in or out of a denomination sometimes hinged on your thoughts concerning these six verses.

Let us remember that the interpretation of numbers plays an important role in Revelation. Every number in Revelation means something more than a literal

description. The number 1000 in apocalyptic literature just means a large amount of time. I don't think we should take the number literally. Given that, I have come to be an Amillennialist. When Christ returns, I don't believe there will be any delay in the renewal of the heavens and the earth. I believe that final judgment will be swift when Christ returns. The Millennium in Rev 20:1-6 is now. Just like we are living in the last days, we are living in the Millennium. How can that be possible? Aren't the last days and visions of Rev 4-19 horrific? Isn't the Millennium good? How can we be living in both at once?

But aren't we living in both right now? The world is not all bad. God's people are doing good work. There is certainly evil in the world, but it's not all evil. Satan was delivered a death blow when Jesus rose from the grave. Satan has already been conquered. But he is not completely gone. We will pick up on that tomorrow. What are your thoughts on the Millennium? What questions do you have regarding these six verses? Journal about these questions, but don't get too hung up on them. No one will truly know until Jesus returns.

Wednesday, October 5 – Revelation 20:7-10

Why? That's the biggest question that comes to mind when I read verse 7. Why? Why wasn't Satan thrown into the lake of fire with the beast and false prophet? Why does he have to be let out after the Millennium? This doesn't make much sense.

The next question I have is "who?" That question comes from verse 8. All of Satan's forces were destroyed before the Millennium. So now, all of a sudden, after 1000 years, people walk away from God to join Satan? Maybe that's possible but doesn't make much sense either.

In my opinion, the only way to make sense of this is to understand it metaphorically not literally. Let's think about it from the perspective of the seven

churches in Revelation. At the end of Rev 19, the beast and false prophet are killed. They would have understood that as Nero or another Roman Emperor. The Millennium would come after that, which would bring relative peace. Peace and safety must mean Satan is bound. However, John's vision warns the churches that this peace is not forever. There will come a time (or maybe more than one) when Satan will be released and cause problems for the church again. (To be clear, Satan is released. He does not escape. God is still the one in ultimate control). So in short summary, it is bad now (before the Millennium), it will get better (the Millennium), it won't be better forever (after Millennium, before New Heaven and Earth).

What about us? I already said yesterday that I believe in an Amillennial view of the Millennium. I believe that we are living in the Millennium right now. In the grand scheme of history, I think we are simultaneously living all of Revelation 4:1-20:10. The visions of heaven are happening right now and the visions of earth are happening right now too. Worship and witness are happening. Tribulation is occurring. Satan has been dealt a death blow but is not dead yet. We await the day when Satan is finally vanquished forever. There will be a day when Jesus returns. I believe that when he returns, it is not to just return to heaven with his people and then wait another 7 years. I believe that when he returns, it's not to reign with one generation and delay final judgment for 1000 years. I believe Jesus is going to return one day and that will be the day of final judgment. That will be the day of the new heaven and earth.

Thursday, October 6 – Matthew 25:31-46

There are some passages of Scripture which are difficult to interpret (like the past two days); then, there are others which are easy to interpret (like today). If we saw Jesus in need, we would of course do everything necessary to take care of him.

What Jesus tells us in this passage is that when we see a neighbor in need, helping them is the same as helping Jesus. On the other hand, when we ignore the needs of those who are vulnerable, we ignore Jesus. The punishment is severe for those who do not help those who are in need.

Who do we not welcome? I think it is appropriate to note that there are no conditions on the people who are in need. It does not say whether the hungry and thirsty are trying to find a job or not. It does not say if the prisoner is remorseful for his crimes. It does not say if the stranger came to the community legally or illegally. The passage does not say that we get to choose which of the vulnerable we serve. The passage does say that those who serve the least of these, serve Jesus.

What do you want to be caught doing when Jesus returns? I don't know when Jesus is going to return, but I know he will one day. If he returns in my lifetime, what do I want to be caught doing? Do I want to be caught making excuses for why I'm not serving people? Or do I want to be caught in prison sharing the gospel with inmates? Do I want to be caught doing nothing? Or do I want to be caught giving food and water to people who are in need? When put that way, the choice is easy. However, every day in our actions, are we making that choice? What do you want to be caught doing when Jesus returns? "Whatever you did to the least of these, you did it to me."

Friday, October 7 – Revelation 20:11-15

Judgment Day arrives in Revelation. Everyone, those who have died and those who are alive must give an account of their actions on earth. Ledgers are brought forth to note every action a person took while on this earth. Not a great day for anyone if that is all there is. Past mistakes are difficult to hear.

But that's not all there is. There is one more book which is on the table. And that is the book which changes everything. That book contains the names of the

people who have been saved. The book of life lists everyone who has put their trust in the Lamb. Those who are listed in the book of life are not judged according to their actions. They are spared the punishment of the lake of fire because the Lord has redeemed them.

It is a great relief to not be judged by our actions but to be saved by the blood of Jesus. There are many books chronicling the sins of mankind. There is only one book of life. The sins of the world are great. The names of the saved are few. Jesus tells the crowd “For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matt 7:13-14). There are volumes of books with the sins of everyone. “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). There is only one book with the names of those who have called upon the Lord to be saved (Rom 10:13).

If you are reading this, chances are that you have made the decision to ask Christ into your life. You have asked for God to write your name in the book of life. However, if that is not the case, consider right now how you want to be judged in the moment before the New Heaven and Earth descend. Do you want to be judged according to your deeds? Or do you want Jesus to take your place? Do you want to be punished for your sin? Or do you want Jesus to have taken the punishment? When put that way, the answer is easy. But have you made the choice? Have you asked Jesus to take your place? There are many books chronicling the problems each of us have created. There is only one book of life. Is your name in there?

Saturday – Sunday, October 8-9 – Revelation 21:3-4

WEEK 9: NEW LIFE!

Monday, October 10 – Revelation 21:1-8

It's always exciting to be part of something new. Think about driving a car off the lot after buying it. Or the first day of school. Or seeing a newborn baby. It's exciting! That excitement infinitely multiplied is what I expect when we begin to enjoy the new Jerusalem.

In the new earth, there is no more evil. There is no more death. There is no crying. There is no pain. There is just perfection because Jesus' prayer has finally come to fruition: "thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." God is making sure of that as the One on the Throne is in the center of the new holy city.

What is the most perfect place you can imagine? Maybe it's sitting on a beach or enjoying the mountains. Maybe it's enjoying the pool on a hot summer day or sitting around a fire during the cold of winter. Maybe it's the beauty of flowering blooming or leaves changing. Whatever it is, it does not compare to the new heaven and the new earth. What awaits those who conquer, as it says in verse 7, is so much greater than anything we can experience on this earth.

The home of God will be among us. Here is the greatest, most exciting part of the new earth. The earth is returned to the way God designed the old earth. Before sin entered the world, God would walk with Adam and Eve. He would meet them in the garden. When evil is gone and the sea is no more, God returns to this habit. We will get to physically live out the classic hymn "In the Garden": "And He walks with me, And He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own." Can you imagine it? Are you excited about this future? What a wonderful future those who conquer have in store!

Tuesday, October 11 – Revelation 21:9-27

The vision of the New Jerusalem is grander than any of us can comprehend. Allow me to highlight two aspects of this wonderful place which prove its incredibleness. One, it is fifteen hundred miles high. Normally, we measure places by area. The New Jerusalem is measured by volume. The old cities of this earth were two dimensional. The New Jerusalem adds a third dimension. And it is 1500 miles, or literally in the Greek, 12,000 stadia, into space. For comparison, the International Space Station is less than 200 miles above the earth's surface. Now, it's important we don't take these number literally. We haven't done that yet in Revelation, and we won't start now. 12,000 stadia would have likely been understood as 12 x 1000. 12 was the number of God's people; 1000 represented great quantity. The point is that New Jerusalem is massive and greater than any city that has ever been on this earth. This is a place only for God's people.

The second thing to notice is the peace that is in the city. Its gates are not shut by day and there is no night. Everything which could cause temptation has been eradicated. Satan, his beasts, his demons, they are gone. There is no need to worry about evil or violence. There is no need to shut the gates. There is no need to lock the doors. One day, there will no longer be anything or anyone to keep out of the house. Nothing unclean can enter. There is perfect peace in the city. What great relief and hope this would have given the original hearers of Revelation. One day, there would no longer be threat of persecution for their faith, but they would be free to walk around the city without fear of death. What great relief and hope this gives many Christians around the world today. Right now, they live under threat of persecution for their faith. Those Christians can relate to Revelation better than we can in America. They are living in places of persecution today. They can read Revelation and know that one day, those who conquer will be able to walk freely around a new city without fear of any abominations attacking them. There is

eternal peace in the city. How exciting it is to look forward to that lifetime which awaits!

Wednesday, October 12 – Revelation 22:1-7

I'm not sure why I'm writing devotions this week. The beauty of the last two chapters of Revelation speaks for themselves. Please make sure you are taking the time to truly picture the beauty of God in these passages. See the crystal water which is flowing from God (Father) and Lamb (Son) as they rule together. Picture the Tree of Life which produces food throughout every season. Picture the healing powers of the leaves from the Tree of Life.

The Tree of Life was in the garden of Eden. It was a tree that Adam and Eve could eat from before they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (which is not seen in the new heaven and earth). Those who are in the Lamb's book of life get to eat from the Tree of Life again and live forever.

I try to envision what these 12 fruits will taste like. Will some be sweet like an apple? Will some be juicy like a peach? Will they be soft like a ripe banana? Will I have to peel them like an orange? It's fun to imagine what it will be like. And as the song says "I can only imagine." If you have the opportunity, take time to listen to the song "I Can Only Imagine." Close your eyes and visualize what it will be like to walk the streets of heaven. What will it be like to continually be in the visual presence of God? What will it be like to eat of the Tree of Life? Take the time to imagine what awaits us someday soon.

Thursday, October 13 – Genesis 3:22-24

After Adam and Eve eat the fruit which God forbid them not to eat, a series of punishments are given to those two and the serpent who tempted them. It is my opinion that the punishments end in Genesis 3:19. Starting in Genesis 3:21, we

have two compassionate actions by God. The first act is easy to see as compassion. God makes garments for the man and woman. God's clothing is much better than the fig leaves which Adam and Eve hastily put together. The second act of compassion, which we read about today, is banishment from the Garden of Eden.

The point of banishment is to protect Adam and Eve from eating from the Tree of Life. Adam and Eve have become sinful beings. If they ate from the Tree of Life, they would live forever in a sinful state. God's compassion drives them out of the garden, so that they cannot live as corrupted humans forever. God's love prevents us from living in our human state forever.

With the exception of a couple of references in Proverbs, the Tree of Life is only mentioned in Genesis 2-3 and Revelation 2 and 22. Eating from the Tree of Life is only profitable once evil has been eradicated. Eating from the Tree of Life brings immortality. Out of God's goodness, he does not want his children to face an eternity on this earth. When God brings the new heaven and earth, when everything old has passed away, God brings us back to the Tree of Life, allowing us to eat and live forever. When it is profitable for humans to eat from the Tree of Life, God allows it. When it would bring awful heartache, God's compassion drives us away from the Tree of Life. Thank you, Lord, for your compassion and love. And thank you that one day, we will eat from the Tree of Life again.

Friday, October 14 – Revelation 22:8-21

You know that feeling right before you leave on vacation? Your bags are packed, they've been loaded into the car, and you've gone over the checklist of preparing the house. There's a moment before you pull out of the driveway when you either think or say out loud "I think we're ready." That's the feeling I get as I come to the end of Revelation. I think I'm ready. Come, Lord Jesus, come. I'm ready.

That can't be said for everyone though. There are many people who are not ready for the return of Jesus. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates."

Citizenship in the new heaven and earth is only given to those who do the commandments of God. Citizenship is only given to people who follow Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Someday, Jesus is returning. We must continue to hold on to the promise that Jesus is coming back. We must continue to tell the world that Jesus is coming back. We know the end of the story. Let us live today with boldness and confidence knowing what is in store for us. Let us conquer today knowing that Jesus has already conquered. Let us hold on to the promise that Jesus is returning. And let our prayer of anticipation be "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"

Saturday – Sunday, October 15-16 – Revelation 22:20